Day 24: The Depressive Position

In Theory: Within the object relations tradition, Melanie Klein described the depressive position as a developmental achievement in which a person recognizes that the person they love and the person they resent are the same person, and can bear that recognition without splitting it apart. It often involves guilt, grief, concern for the other, and a wish to repair what feels damaged in the relationship. This milestone advances beyond mere ambivalence. While ambivalence notes the passive tension of opposing feelings, the depressive position actively holds that contradiction within a single relationship, transforming conflict into a capacity for concern. This milestone allows the individual to accept human imperfection, moving away from blame and stepping into a more durable, lasting intimacy.

In Experience: A person recognizes, sometimes painfully, that someone they love has also disappointed or hurt them, and that their anger does not erase the attachment. Alongside the anger comes guilt, concern, or the wish to restore something strained without denying what was felt. The other person becomes harder to idealize, but also more real. The relationship becomes more complicated, but also more whole.

In Thought: What feels like contradiction may belong to a single lived reality. The same person can hold opposing qualities without either canceling the other.

In Print: Viorst, J. *Necessary Losses* (1986)

In Attention: Notice when someone is perceived as entirely good or entirely bad.